

DISPLAYS

FAQ

Q My TV has a common interface (CI) slot. What can I use it for?

A CI slots, like the one on the Regza 32C3030D (opposite), take a conditional access module (CAM). The CAM is a subscription card that will add extra, paid-for channels to the Freeview channels that are available on the TV's built-in digital tuner.

However, these slots aren't as useful as they sound. There are only two services making use of it, both offered by Top Up TV (www.topuptv.com). Setanta Sports provides one channel with coverage of live sports, including Premiership football matches. There's no contract, but a £10.99 monthly subscription charge plus £29.99 for the CAM. For £7.99 a month, Top Up TV provides three channels on shared time: UKGold 4pm-1am, UKStyle 12pm-4pm and Euroports 7.30am-10pm. You get more channels if you opt to use the company's Top Up TV+ box instead of a CAM for your TV.

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TECO TL3212RM

★★★

£351 inc VAT

Teco's TL3212RM is by far the cheapest 32in LCD TV that we've seen. Not that you'd notice by looking at it, as the glossy, piano-black surround and silver strip, which hides the speakers, make it look as good as more expensive TVs. The range of inputs is impressive, too, with two HDMI, D-sub, composite, component and two SCART sockets providing enough connectors for all your home-cinema kit.

Sadly, not quite as much effort has been put into the TV's quality. For starters, there's no digital tuner, so you'll need to buy a separate set-top box if you want to watch Freeview channels. We'd really expect digital TV with a modern TV.

The analogue tuner is quite good, though, and it automatically tuned into the five terrestrial channels. Reception was good and we got a stable picture on all the channels. Sadly, picture quality isn't very good.

Colours looked washed out in our test images and the TV's picture adjustments only resulted in harsh and garish colours. Playing standard-definition interlaced video produced some horrible results. Fast-moving objects showed some ghosting and, despite setting noise reduction to its highest level, there was significant speckling in large areas of a single colour. This is distracting, particularly when watching sports.

High-definition movie clips fared no better. We used the TV's two preset modes, Standard and Cinema. In Standard mode colours were washed out; in Cinema mode they had a garish tone. High-contrast scenes were badly displayed, placing a halo around dark objects.



The TL3212RM managed to display a reasonably sharp Windows desktop at its native resolution of 1,366x768 when connected to a PC via VGA. However, when we connected it to a computer using a DVI-to-HDMI cable, something rather peculiar happened: the PC detected the native resolution on the display as an unusual 1,360x765. This resulted in the TV repeating the pixels in the 1,360th column six times to match the screen's native width. This strange effect occurred with a second PC we tried, too.

Overall, it didn't do well in any of our monitor tests. In particular, it had a great deal of difficulty in reproducing our greyscale gradient, showing lots of banding.

Prices are falling all the time, and in a few months you'll probably be able to pick up Toshiba's Regza 32C3030D (right) for a similar price. If you're really restricted to a tight budget, we'd recommend waiting that little bit longer rather than buying this TV.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ Analogue channels only
- ✗ Not suitable for watching HD

32in LCD HD TV 1,366x768 native resolution, VGA, 2x HDMI, component, composite, 2x SCART
PART CODE TL3212RM
SUPPLIER <http://cpc.farnell.com>
DETAILS www.teco.com.tw

Also consider...

SAMSUNG LE26R51BD

★★★★★

£490 inc VAT

PRICE CUT!



Samsung's 26in HD TV possesses stunning good looks and oozes quality. It receives digital and analogue TV stations, so there's no need to use a Freeview box.

Video and PC inputs look amazing through this set, giving sharp and vibrant images. This model also has support for HD video, making it remarkably good value.



26IN LCD TV 1,360x768 resolution, HD Ready, 1x HDMI, 1x VGA, 2x SCART, 1x component, 1x S-video, headphone
PART CODE LE26R51BD SUPPLIER www.bargainstock.co.uk
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk ✓ Great picture ✗ Speakers lack bass FULL REVIEW Feb 2006

DELL 1800MP

★★★★★

£704 inc VAT



Dell's 1800MP is a good all-round projector, and at this price it's a bargain. It has excellent image quality. Two D-sub VGA connectors allow it to be connected to two PCs at once, so you can swap between two presenters.

If you want a projector for business this is the best choice, and it's also suitable for watching movies.



OFFICE PROJECTOR DLP 1,024x768 native resolution, 2,000:1 contrast ratio, 2,100 ANSI lumens PART CODE 1800MP
SUPPLIER www.digitaldirect.co.uk DETAILS www.dell.co.uk
✓ Good contrast; superb image quality; minimal rainbow effect
FULL REVIEW May 2007

TOSHIBA Regza 32C3030D

★★★★★

£431 inc VAT

Toshiba's Regza 32C3030D is part of the company's new budget range of HD TVs. While it's not quite as cheap as Teco's TL312RM (reviewed left), it's a much better set and even gives LG's 32LC2D (see 'Also Consider...', below) a run for its money.

The Regza has a good range of inputs, including two HDMI ports, D-sub, two SCART (one RGB) and component. There are both digital and analogue tuners, so you can get a TV signal no matter where you live, and a common interface (CI) slot so you can subscribe to paid-for digital channels, too (see FAQ, left).

This is an easy TV to set up. All the inputs and control buttons are easily accessed as the stand smoothly swivels the TV from side to side. Adjusting the picture settings is a breeze, thanks to the clear menus. Setting up the TV channels is straightforward using the Auto Tuning feature in the TV's menu. The analogue channels did need reordering afterwards, but this was simple enough. Picture quality was acceptable over analogue, and excellent when using the digital tuner.

When it came to watching standard-definition interlaced video, the Regza 32C3030D did better than any LCD TV we've seen. Images were sharp and completely smooth, with no jagged edges on straight lines, such as the edge of a table or programme credits. HD video also looked really good on the 32C3030D. Colours were rich and vibrant and the picture was very sharp.



Its performance as a computer monitor was also impressive, displaying a pin-sharp image at its native resolution of 1,366x768. Text was crisp and legible, whites were pure and clean and colours were deep and vibrant. Skin tones in our test images looked a little ruddy, however.

Our main problem with the 32C3030D was that blacks aren't pure. It's possible to adjust the screen by lowering the backlight and brightness, but this resulted in a loss of detail in dark parts of an image.

Two 20W speakers are housed in a thin strip across the bottom of the display. These produce a reasonable amount of bass and are quite loud, but get painfully distorted at top volume. There's an S/PDIF audio output and a 3.5mm jack for connecting to a sub-woofer.

Apart from the problem of getting sufficiently dark blacks, the Regza 32C3030D produced excellent image quality, but LG's 32LC2D still has the edge.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Excellent image quality
- ✓ Lots of inputs
- ✗ Blacks not dark enough

32in LCD HD TV 1,366x768 native resolution, VGA, 2x HDMI, component, 2x SCART, optical S/PDIF, digital and analogue tuners
PART CODE 32C3030D
SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk
DETAILS www.home-entertainment.toshiba.co.uk

LG 32LC2D

★★★★★

£490 inc VAT



LG's 32LC2D produces beautiful, realistic pictures. Images from our HD movie clips were perfect and the TV displayed every detail flawlessly. Connecting to a PC is easy through D-sub or HDMI and the picture was brilliant. It's excellent value.



32in LCD HD TV VGA, HDMI, component, 3x SCART, optical S/PDIF, digital tuner PART CODE 32LC2D SUPPLIER www.cooplectricalshop.co.uk DETAILS <http://uk.lge.com>

✓ Superb all-round picture quality; good computer display
FULL REVIEW Nov 2006

HITACHI Illumina PJ-TX300

★★★★★

£783 inc VAT

PRICE CUT!



The glossy sheen on Hitachi's Illumina PJ-TX300 looks fabulous, but there's more to this projector than its good looks. The PJ-TX300 will show a high-quality 203cm image at two metres. If you want a projector to show films this is an ideal choice, and it's a bargain, too.



HOME CINEMA PROJECTOR 3-LCD, 1,280x720 native resolution, 10,000:1 contrast ratio, 1,200 ANSI lumens
PART CODE HITPRX63 SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk
DETAILS www.hitachidigitalmedia.com ✓ Inexpensive; superb image quality; excellent contrast FULL REVIEW May 2007

CHOOSING A... Projector

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

NATIVE RESOLUTION: 1,024x768

BRIGHTNESS: 1,000 ANSI lumens

CONTRAST RATIO: 500:1

LAMP LIFE: 2,000 hours

CHECK: Weight, throw distance, noise

Recommended minimum in grey

1 Low-cost projectors make two main sacrifices. The brightness, measured in ANSI lumens, will be relatively low and the native resolution will be limited to 1,024x768. Neither need be serious drawbacks if you want to use your projector for presentations or DVDs.

If you want to be ready for High Definition video, though, you'll need a projector with a resolution of at least 1,280x720 and either an HDMI port or HDCP-compliant DVI port.

2 Image quality is obviously important, but this is hard to assess from specifications alone. A high contrast ratio (over 500:1) adds depth to the picture and is one tangible benefit of projectors based on digital light processing (DLP) rather than the older LCD technology. The quality of the optics and colour balance cannot be gauged without consulting a review, though.

3 Consider where you'll be using your projector; size and weight are important if the unit will be moved around a lot. You should aim for under 3kg if portability is an issue. Small rooms demand a quiet (sub-33dB) projector and a flexible throw distance; this tells you how close or far away the screen can be. Most projectors can mirror or rotate their image to cope with ceiling mounting or rear projection.

4 Check that the projector can cope with all the signals you might want to feed it. Common video formats are supported by almost all projectors, but high-resolution VGA signals and HDMI aren't. Highly detailed slides will display at their best only on pricier projectors with a 1,280x1,024 native resolution.

5 The brightness of the projector will depend on where you need to use it. Projectors with 1,000 ANSI lumens are fine for darkened rooms, but for meeting rooms you should get a minimum of 1,300 ANSI lumens. Remember brighter projectors will cost more to run as their bulbs need replacing more often. An ECO mode reduces the brightness of the projector but increases bulb life.